Teen And Up Audiences

No Archive Warnings Apply

M/M

Star Trek: Alternate Original Series (Movies)
Star Trek
Star Trek: The Original Series

James T. Kirk/Spock

James T. Kirk
Spock (Star Trek)
Crew of the Starship Enterprise

Fluff
Silly
bondmates
Chekov is a little shit and I love him
English space travel , SPIRK fic rec , Shady Star Trek AO Faves , Kirk/Spock , These just make me happy , Transworm Station 2022 , FaveFicFinds

Echolocation

Darksknight

Summary:

Kirk and Spock don't realize that they've bonded right away. The rest of the crew is a different story.

Notes:

Very silly, but I liked how they didn't realize they'd bonded in the original series, and wanted to do my own take on figuring it out. The ending is heavily inspired by CaityCat (https://archiveofourown.org/users/CaityCat/pseuds/CaityCat) 's fic "I Know You Better (https://archiveofourown.org/works/7603027) " which, by the way, is fantastic and definitely worth a read. I wondered how CaityCat's fic would have gone if Kirk and Spock were bonded at that point, and thus, this fic was born. I also really like the idea of a very media-centered planet, so it was really fun to write. Anyway, enjoy!

Now edited with help (and by help I mean she did everything and I nodded my head like I was part of the process) from the lovely poetic_nonsense (https://archiveofourown.org/users/poetic_nonsense/profile) You are the best and I owe you my life!

(See the end of the work for more notes (#work_endnotes) .)

"I'm just saying, if I was meant to eat spinach every day, it would taste good, you know?" Jim waved his fork in Bones's face, knowing it would irritate the doctor. He smothered his grin when Bones pushed the offending utensil away, scoffing.

"Jim, you're going to give yourself a goddamn heart attack if you only eat burgers the rest of your life."

"I eat more than burgers."

Bones raised a brow.

"I do!"

“Name one thing you’ve eaten for lunch in the past week that’s not a burger.”

“Ha! Easy. I had soup with Spock two days ago.” He resisted the urge to stick his tongue out, just barely. “So there.”

Bones rolled his eyes. “Plomeek with the hobgoblin doesn’t count, you two eat together every Tuesday.”

“We do not.”

Bones said, “Okay, forget the burgers. Name one Tuesday in… oh, let’s be generous. One Tuesday in the past *month* that you haven’t eaten with your first officer.” When Jim opened his mouth, Bones raised a hand, cutting him off. “And that *does not count* the time you were held up in sickbay with plasma burns, because the first thing you said when you sat down was that you were gonna be late for lunch with Spock.” He smirked, crossing his arms, and waited.

Jim opened his mouth, and then slowly, closed it. He looked down at his plate, brows furrowed.

“Yeah,” Bones snorted. “That’s what I thought.”

“Sometimes it’s not plomeek…” Jim tried.

“Yeah, well, chicken noodle isn’t far off.” Bones laughed at Jim’s expression. “You think I don’t know you, kid? Chicken noodle, plomeek, and burgers. It’s a miracle that you haven’t gone into cardiac arrest yet.”

“Soup is good for you!” Jim defends. “And look!" He put down his spinach fork and reached for the burger on the other side of the plate. "There’s lettuce and tomato on my burger. It’s practically a salad already.” He bit into it to prove his point, grinning around a bite when Bones just huffed.

“All I’m saying is that you could stand to eat a little healthier. Some variety, maybe. Plomeek is great, I have no idea how Spock got you to eat something that good for you, but it doesn’t outweigh all the damn crap you put in that pie hole of yours.”

“Oh, maybe I should have a piece of pie for des-“

“Jim I will hypo your ass into the next millennium, you hear me?”

Jim snorted out a laugh. “Loud and clear. Maybe *you* should get some pie, relax a little, for once in your-“ he stopped.

“Jim?” Bones looked over his shoulder, to see why Jim had started staring into space. Nothing was there, so he turned back to the captain, brows furrowed. “You okay there?”

“Yeah.” Jim blinked, but it did nothing to dispel the faraway look in his eye. He put the half-eaten burger down on his plate and stood. “I’ll... be right back.”

“What’s going on?” Bones stood, too, hastily gathering up their trays to bring them back to the recycler. It was odd that Jim had forgotten his- as much as he liked to pretend otherwise, Jim really did have good manners. “Someone comm you?”

“No, I just have this weird feeling that Spock did something stupid.” He blinked away the dazed look in his eyes and started determinedly towards the lift. “Come with me, I bet he burnt his hands.”

“What?” Bones started after Jim, baffled as he was. “How in the hell would you possibly know that?”

“I don’t know.” Jim stepped onto the lift, shrugging. “Just a feeling.”

“Damn specific feelin’ ya got there.” Bones muttered.

They hurried to the science lab, nearly making it to the door before an ensign burst into the hall. She nearly ran into Kirk, skidding to a halt at the last step, eyes wide. “Oh.” She said. She looked over to McCoy. “I was just on my way to get you.”

Jim slipped past her and into the room.

“What’s the matter?” Bones asked. “Someone hurt themselves?”

She nodded frantically. “Mr. Spock burned his hands but-“

“Are you *shitting* me?”

She blinked at him, baffled.

“Sorry, not you.” He grumbled. He started into the room after Jim. “How in the hell…”

Jim was already fussing over Spock, who held his hands out blank-faced, looking nearly embarrassed by the Captain’s attentions. Jim said, “You’re not going to contaminate me; forget about your bacterial cultures for a second and think about yourself!”

“It would have been irresponsible to leave the room without first deconta-“

“And then suffered worse burns if your ensign hadn’t found Bones fast enough.” Jim waved him over to where they had a first aid kit laid out at Spock’s station. “Bones, come fix this, would you?”

Bones could just about kill the two of them sometimes. Muttering to himself about pots and kettles, he swiped the dermal regenerator out of Jim’s hands and got to work on Spock’s. The burns weren’t large, but they were deep, and based on the slight tremble in Spock’s hands, they were painful.

“This coulda’ been pretty bad, you know.” Bones muttered.

“It is fortunate you were nearby, Doctor.” Spock said.

“Fortunate my ass. Jim dragged me up here ‘cuz ‘a his gut feeling.” He rolled his eyes. “Hows that for science, huh?”

Spock said, “Captain Kirk’s ‘gut feelings’ are correct 92.3337 percent of the time. It is hardly surprising-“

“Yeah, yeah, save it.” He looked up at Jim, who was frowning, rubbing his temple- his tell for a nasty migraine. “And don’t think I don’t see your headache over there. I keep telling you, you need to cut back on the-“

“Burgers. Fine. I guess Spock and I will just have to have plomeek Tuesdays *and* Thursdays.” He grinned at Spock, as if willing the Vulcan to back him up.

“I will reconfigure my schedule to allow for this.” Spock said solemnly.

Bones just sighed. “I need a damn vacation from the two of you idiots.”

Uhura loved her Wednesdays with Spock- they worked out translations together in near silence, sliding each other PADDs and nodding, speaking in hurried Vulcan. It was peaceful, and it reminded her of why she’d loved him, and why she still did, in some ways. He was easily one of her best friends, and she liked to think the same was true for Spock.

… But if he didn’t stop twitching his right hand, she was going to kill him.

Everyone had their tics and quirks. Uhura herself tapped her feet when she was working, but Spock? Spock didn’t move when he was working. He was a statue- a paragon of Vulcan stiffness. So the twitching? It was really getting to her.

“Spock.” She said, finally.

He looked up at her in question.

“Stop.”

His brows furrowed, ever so slightly. “What is it that you wish me to stop?”

She pointed at his hand. “You keep… I know this is going to sound stupid, but you keep twitching your hand, and it’s driving me crazy. Do you have something on your mind? I’ve never seen you… distracted, I guess.”

He looked down at his hand like it was alien to him. He said, “I was not aware I was moving.” That, of course, made them both nervous- Vulcans have total control of their bodies at all times; complete awareness of themselves and what they are doing. For Spock to not have been aware he was doing something… Then he frowned. Or, the Spock equivalent of a frown. “I realize now that I was indeed moving my thumb. Curious.”

“You and Kirk both.” She sighed. “Maybe it’s contagious.”

Spock looked back up at her questioningly.

“Oh, I guess you wouldn’t know- you had the conn. He had something down on the surface that screwed with his nervous system, I guess. Doctor McCoy said he would be fine, and he fixed it for the most part, but he’s still got that twitch.” She said, “It makes sense that you would mirror his tics without realizing it. You guys are always certain to keep yourselves on the same wavelength. It’s why you make such a good command team.”

Spock didn’t look comforted.

“It’s not a big deal, Spock.” She laughed. “Just the human bit of you playing copy-cat. We all do it, without realizing it. If I hang out with Scotty long enough I start saying ‘I cannae’ do something.”

“You are human." He said. “It is to be expected. However, I-“ he paused, looking up at the door.

“What is it?” She looked at the door as well.

It opened, and in walked Jim.

“Okay my little language nerds.” He said, grinning. He rubbed his hands together. “I’ve got a puzzle for the two of you.”

Uhura looked back over to Spock. How had he known that Kirk was coming? The room was soundproofed- not even his Vulcan hearing could have picked up sounds from the hall. She narrowed her eyes at him, but he didn’t notice- attention fixed solely on Jim.

It’s not that the Captain is weird. He’s not. He’s a cool guy, really, even if he can be kind of a dick about bringing alien plants onboard. (They bring alien *aliens* on board, damn it, why not a few flowers?) It’s just that sometimes the captain does weird things.

Illani of Lethusraston was a pretty alien. Sulu knew it, Jim knew it, the crew knew it. She had shimmery charcoal skin and neon-blue eyes that glowed in the dim light, soft cloud-like hair that drifted about her in smoky impressions of white. She was gorgeous, and she was clean and smelled nice, and there should have been absolutely no reason for Kirk to yank his hand back from hers moments before she leaned in to kiss it.

Sulu watched the Captain shove his hands into his pockets (thank you alts for the pocket upgrade on the newest batch of uniforms) and nervously say, “It’s, uh, nice to meet you!”

She lifted a brow and then slowly offered her own hand out for him to take and kiss, as was custom. The captain- the smooth operator, the playboy, the golden child no one could resist- blushed down to his collar and pretended not to notice.

Uhura smoothly stepped forward and kissed the alien's hand in lieu of the Captain, glaring daggers at him over her shoulder.

Sulu echoed the sentiment. They'd been to a planet where the standard greeting was to reach out and grope the right breasts of one another, and the Captain hadn't so much as batted an eye as he reached out and very professionally and clinically felt delegate after delegate up.

And now a little kiss on the hand was making him blush?

God, what a *nerd*.

Sulu watched him closely the whole mission, logging everything he was going to make fun of over drinks at a later time. The Lethusrasions seemed to be all about hands and Kirk, for some reason, seemed to be all about no hands whatsoever. He avoided hand-to-hand contact like the plague, grabbing wrists and elbows and drawing back just before his lips ever met the skin of anyone's knuckles. It was, as Spock would say, *fascinating* to watch. Speaking of Spock, the Vulcan seemed to be the only other person who seemed to have a problem, but he was a Vulcan, and they had that whole no touchy-touchy thing going on, so it was expected of him.

Kirk was being a total dork, and there was no explanation for it.

"Sorry," he dodged Illani's hands again, holding his up to his chest. "It just… uh, hands feel really intimate. I don't… know why?" He seemed baffled by his own behavior, which was at least a comfort to Sulu- he wasn't going crazy.

"Oh, you are Vul-i-can as well?"

"Vulcan," he corrected. "And no… uh, I'm not. I'm human."

"Curious." She said. "The rest of your kind hold no such reservations."

"Well, I guess I must be picking up mannerisms from Mr. Spock."

And there was the explanation. Except, it couldn't be that simple. Jim seemed legitimately flustered by hand-to-hand contact, going so far as curl his fingers into the cuffs of his dress uniform. Sulu shook his head and then was struck by a sudden thought.

Sulu wasn't a dick, per se, but by god, he loved to pull dick moves. It was the connection he and Kirk had to begin with- they were both thrill seekers, and they both did dickish things. It was the very foundation of their friendship.

He smirked and then slipped his hand into Kirk's, lacing their fingers.

Kirk let out the most embarrassing "eep!" to ever leave a grown adult's mouth. Before Sulu could piss himself laughing, though, Spock was upon them.

"Mr. Sulu." He said. He grabbed Sulu's wrist and very carefully removed it from the Captain's vicinity. "Please refrain from touching the Captain in such a manner."

Kirk practically hid behind Spock, like the Vulcan was his knight in shining armor, come to save his gold-clad damsel-in-distress ass. God, Sulu was going to tease him for this for years. As soon as he was finished being terrified of what Spock was going to do to him.

"O-of course, sir, my mistake."

He slipped over to Uhura, who was making conversation with Iilani at the bar. He muttered, "Vulcans."

She turned to him. "What?"

"Spock nearly bit my head off for holding Kirk's hand."

Uhura laughed. "Guess he wasn't in the mood to put up with any Vulcan kisses in his sight." And then she paused. And Sulu paused, and they both met eyes.

"You don't think…" He trailed off.

She shook her head mutely.

They turned and looked across the room. Spock and Kirk were talking, both facing each other, hands safely linked behind their backs so that there would be no accidental touching. They behaved as if it would be wildly inappropriate to so much as graze their fingers together.

"They are so weird." Sulu muttered.

"Tell me about it."

"Yeah and if we just jimmy rig that- ha, *jimmy* rig- then we can probably keep this baby going until Star Base nine, right?" Jim peered up at the warp core from where he and Scotty were crouching beneath it.

Scotty shook his head. "She'll go alright, Captain, but I'm not so sure I wan' ta' rig the little lady, there's only so much she kin take in a month. Ya' already got 'er rigged up o're there from the Klingons, sir, I-"

“Oh son of a bitch!”

Scott jumped. “Captain?”

“Sorry, Scotty, one sec.” he stood and pulled out his comm. “Kirk to Spock.”

“Spock here.”

“Did you just capture my goddamn rook? Because I’ve been playing it out in my head and I see you swiping my rook. You did, didn’t you? Traitor, I thought you said you’d wait until tonight!”

“It would be unseemly to drag out the terms of your defeat, Captain. I have merely expedited the process.”

“Yeah? Knight to B-seven.”

“This is hardly an appropriate usage of our comms, Sir.”

“You’re just sore over what a good move that was and- put your bishop down, Spock, I swear to god if you try to pull your stupid Vulcan bird technique on me again I’m kicking your ass into next Tuesday.”

Silence.

“Spock you insubordinate traitor.”

“I believe I will have check in three moves, Captain.”

“Yeah except I know you’re going to move your knight and then your pawn and then that other pawn and the queen so I’m moving my queen even though I know you’ll capture my bishop in three turns because-“ he paused. “You know what, fuck it, I’m coming up there to make you eat your words. Kirk out.”

Scotty stared at him. “That isn’t how you’re supposed to play chess, Captain.”

“I know, but I just know how he’s going to move and that makes the entire thing more…” he trailed off, shrugging. “You already know what you’re going to do, right? You just wanted me to get my lesser-brilliant idea out of the way so you could blow my mind with yours?”

“Well when you put it like that, Captain, you make a man feel a mite small.”

“Love you too, Scotty. I’ll see you at zero-six-hundred.”

Scotty watched him go.

Alone with his lady, he looked up at the warp core, saying, “They're a couple of odd ones, aye?”

The best part about being a genius was noticing things. Noticing things *fast* , Chekov should say, because there was no way this one was going to be kept under wraps forever. Being one of the few that picked up on how weird Kirk and Spock were in the very beginning, however, was a sublime experience.

He’d heard the rest of the bridge make little comments- just things in passing about off things the Captain or Commander did the other day, et cetera, et cetera. Uhura had said something about Spock mirroring one of Kirk’s tics, and Sulu had replied with his own comments on how Kirk seemed to be integrating himself into Spock’s culture without being aware of it.

Oh, they were like little babies. Chekov was going to have *so much fun*.

The Captain looked bored in his chair. Star-mapping sounded fun, but in reality, it was a lot of sitting around doing nothing. Chekov didn’t mind, of course, but there was always room in the day for shenanigans- boredom or not.

“Hikaru.” He nudged his friend, watching the helmsman jerk out of his daydreams. He grinned. “Watch zis.”

Sulu straightened, instantly interested.

“Keptin,” Chekov said, casually- almost lazily. “Vhere is Commander Spock?”

“Mess hall.” Kirk replied back, not giving it any thought. He was working on signing paperwork, PADD balanced on his knee. Perfect.

“Keptin, vhat is Commander Spock eating today?”

Hikaru raised his brows, but Chekov just grinned. He held up his finger, as if to say, *wait for it.*

“He’s doing something to the replicators with Scotty, not eating.” Kirk said. He was barely paying any attention, talking on autopilot. He huffed, “Whatever it is, he sure thinks it’s interesting.”

Chekov grinned wide and whipped his head over to where Hikaru was trying to smother his snicker behind his hands. Hikaru was all over the game in a manner of seconds, but they both knew they’d have to space it out- too much at once and the Captain would be onto them like a ferengi on gold-pressed latinum.

Luckily, they were barely an hour into Alpha shift, and the Captain had a lot of paperwork to do. Chekov waited around an hour before nudging Sulu’s arm again.

Hikaru turned his attention to Kirk, not moving his body, but slyly smirking as he looked out of the corner of his eye.

“Keptin Kirk?” Chekov began.

“Hm?”

“Vhat is Commander Spock doing now?”

“Making notes about his lab specimen.” He said. He didn’t even look up from his PADD.

“Thenk you, Keptin.”

Sulu leaned in and whispered, “My turn next.”

“It is my game, Hikaru. It is alvays my turn.”

“One hour and then I get to ask one, come on!”

He sighed, dramatically. “I seppose if you *must* .”

The hour crawled by even slower when they were waiting it out. Chekov tried to busy himself by plotting the course ahead as far as possible, and with as much detail as allowed, but it wasn’t enough to keep his mind focused. He continued to check the time, but it seemed to drag out forever.

Forty minutes… perhaps it had been long enough? No, he’d wait, or he would spoil the game-

Kirk perked up suddenly, swirling around to look at the lift.

Chekov leaned over to Sulu and whispered, “Mr. Spock incoming in *tri, dva, odin* -“

“Mr. Spock.” Kirk grinned wide as Spock stepped out of the lift and onto the bridge. “What can I do for you?”

“As if he doesn’t already know.” Sulu said.

“Zey are like pocket persons. Zey know what ze other is up to alvays.” Chekov snickered.

Spock said, “There is an anomaly ahead I think you would find… most fascinating.”

“Fascinating.” Sulu whispered. “Captain, I’ve brought you flowers made of space-“

“-Chocolates and a poem, sir, it is very professional.” Chekov finished.

Kirk said, “Thank you, Mr. Spock. You may attend to your station- I’ll take you off beta shift if you’d like to stay for the rest of Alpha.”

“Understood, Captain. On our present course, we will be at the anomaly in seventy three minutes fifty two seconds. Approximately.”

“Approximately.” Kirk echoed. He grinned. “Not going to add on that point three, huh?”

“Keptin,” Chekov dramatically whispered to Sulu, “Please, not in front of ze crew!”

“This is nothing compared to what I’ve got in store for you off-shift, Commander Tight Pants.” Sulu breathed back. He fluttered his eyelashes, dramatically, not quite managing to wrestle back his grin.

“Gentlemen,” Kirk called over their hushed giggling. “Something interesting?”

“Oh, no, Keptin. Ve vere simply discussing ze anomaly, Sir.”

“Very interesting stuff.” Sulu echoed, nodding sagely.

Kirk raised a brows at them.

The hour-some-odd minutes passed in relative silence, though Chekov could hardly choke back his laughter any time he caught Sulu’s eye. When they reached the anomaly Kirk did get pretty excited about it all, giving Spock the conn so he could run down to Science to see what the big-wigs made of it. He invited Spock along, but Spock said he’d encountered such an anomaly before, under Captain Pike.

Silence reigned on the bridge as Spock settled in the chair. It went that way for half an hour or so before Spock got absorbed in continuing one of his science reports, walking back to his station to begin recording data.

Hikaru turned to Chekov to wink, eyes shining with mirth, before swiveling over to face Spock. “Commander Spock,” he called, casually, “What does the Keptain think of the anomaly?”

“The Captain is awash with feelings of delight and curiosity, though he is frustrated with the ship’s data bank. It is slightly malfunctioning at the moment.”

Chekov and Sulu swallowed back their mirth and didn’t speak for a couple of minutes to avoid catching Spock’s attention. Eventually, though, Chekov turned to Hikaru, fingers steepled as he prepared to reveal his genius plan.

“New game.” He said. “Echolocation, Command Team Style.”

“Give it to me.” Hikaru demanded.

“From now on, ven ve see one alone, ve ask vhere ze other is. Zis goes doubly ven ve know one is in an embarrassing situation. If ve have even ze slightest *hint* Mr. Spock is in ze fresher, ve *must* ask ze Keptin his vhereabouts.”

“Oh, it is so on.” Hikaru grinned. “Person who gets one of the two to answer the most embarrassingly wins.”

“No, no, person who gets one of zem to *refuse* to answer vins. Twenty credits.”

“Done.”

They exchanged a handshake, under the watchful eye of Uhura, who’d evidently caught on to the fact they were plotting. Chekov eyed the rest of the bridge, wondering how many of them he could get in on the game without being told on…

He looked back and Uhura and grinned.

He was going to be a very, very rich man.

"Jim, I'm not going to ask what happened down there, but I expect by the time you come up with your official report there's going to be one hell of an explanation."

"Sir I can explain everything." Jim said. He paused. "Almost everything."

Sometimes Pike wanted to bash his head into his desk when talking to Jim. He loved the boy, he really did- he often thought of him as the son he'd never had. But this? This shit made him want to warp out to uncharted space and throttle the living daylights out of the idiot.

"Not. Asking." He ground out.

"But you've got to know! It wasn't my fault. None of our faults, really, I swear. Just ask Spock. Wait, wait, I'll get him."

Well, at least if he was getting Spock, they hadn't done anything completely untoward. Spock wasn't the guy you got to back you up on your lies, so far as Pike knew. He'd changed over the years, and often times it looked like maybe he was stretching the truth pretty thin to cover Jim's ass in their reports, but he was still a Vulcan, and Vulcans didn't lie.

That didn't mean that at the end of the day there wasn't going to be a file labeled "Oasrises First Contact Fire Fight," but at least maybe there would be one labeled "hostile natives and how to avoid them" or "how to save your crew from violent aliens" or something else that would get Jim another rec.

"Admiral Pike." Spock flashed the ta'al.

"Mr. Spock." Chris sighed. "Pleasure to see you again."

Jim squeezed back into the frame. "So I mean-" he paused and then turned to Spock, eyebrows raised. "Well fine, if you want to tell him."

Had Spock kicked Kirk or something? Pike furrowed his brows, confused by the sudden shift in conversation.

"We beamed down to the planet at-" he paused, looking over at Jim. "I started this way because-"

"-Yeah but he already knows that technical-"

"-It is important to include all details because-"

"-Yeah but we're only giving him the rundown on the-"

"-I understand your point, however-"

"Yeah, okay, sure, but you know."

"Ah." Spock raised a brow. "I see."

Pike had no idea what the fuck was going on, and honestly, was slightly alarmed. There was no kicking or any other such cues- they were talking back and forth seamlessly, and somehow, they knew what the other was conveying. It was… certainly something to see. And he'd been afraid they wouldn't get along at one point. Ha.

"The firefight began due to a misunderstanding between our cultures. The away team was clothed in regulation uniform, which included shirts. To cover one's chest, in Oas culture, is an act of war."

So, it was actually a pretty good explanation.

Jim waved his hand and Spock said, "Yes, Captain, I was getting to that."

Chris was going to get whiplash trying to keep up with the two of them.

"We only discovered this cultural misstep when the Captain tore his shirt off in order to bandage Lieutenant Chekov's leg. Upon seeing him shirtless, the Oas people took our surrender in stride. Lieutenant Uhura was able to make out what was happening and demanded we all remove our shirts. Due to the unfavorable climate I, along with several others, beamed back aboard so that we would not have to remove our uniforms."

"Right." It wasn't the weirdest thing he'd ever heard. He rubbed his forehead. "Casualties?"

"Three of ours injured, one dead." Jim said solemnly. Then he rolled his eyes. "Yes, Mr. Spock, I was getting there."

"They are now members of the federation and as such the report must include-"

"Yeah." Jim turned his eyes back to Pike. "Three of their people dead and four more injured. Nothing a little toast and shirtless banquet couldn't smooth over." He shrugged.

Spock said, "The Captain privately very sincerely regrets the loss of life."

Jim turned to him, groaning, "Spock."

"It is illogical to conceal your regard for life from Admiral Pike, Captain," Spock said, easily. "That regard is something which Pike has already recognized in you, as it is one of the aspects of your personality which gave him hope for your captaincy."

Pike was going to throw up.

"Yeah. Well." Jim blushed, rubbing the back of his neck. He looked up at Spock sharply and said, "Shut up!"

"Anyway." Pike cut in, firmly. "If you two are *quite* finished."

Jim looked over at him, brow furrowed, like he didn't know why Pike was uncomfortable. Pike was further confused to see that Jim really wasn't playing around- he was genuinely baffled by Pike's reaction.

What the hell was space doing to them?

"I'll… make a note of what happened." Pike sighed. "Take care, Jimmy."

Jim smiled a little. "Yeah. You too, Pike. Don't go too long without checking in or we might have to start another war." He winked.

Good lord, Jim really was going to be the death of him. "Pike out."

He sat at his desk for a good while, staring at the blank view screen. Finally, he leaned back in his chair, staring down the hall to where he could see Number One working in her own home office. "Hey." He yelled.

She looked sharply back at him.

"Why can't we communicate telepathically?"

She flipped him off and went back to work.

Well, the world wasn't ending, then. Good.

"Hello, hello, hello! And welcome to another round of Read Me! Today's guest stars are Captain James T. Kirk of the USS Enterprise and his first officer, Commander Spock!" Thunderous applause broke the host's speech, but she paused, smiling wide, and allowed it. Her skin flashed purple and blue as she spun around to where she had Jim and Spock standing at separate podiums. "As you all know, only the most cohesive teams are allow to talk to our team leaders! If they don't flow, they don't go. Will Captain Kirk and Commander Spock be making a treaty today, or heading back into The Space with their *t'ech'la* between their legs? Sign in after this short message from the Royal Embassy."

Jim looked over at the host as she made a sign and the recording team lowered their devices. "Is this really necessary?"

"Well of course!" She laughed, a bubbly, trilling sound. Her three eyes took him in, sweeping up and down his form. "You don't look silly, but you are."

Jim wasn't sure how to respond to that.

"If you talk to Char'Veck and M'Gel'Cha, you'll be doing it as a team! They can't have any unstable teams spoiling their connection. Only the closest of pairs may have their audience. Do not worry, silly earth man. They will watch the holos, so even if you do fail, they may still seek audience with you if you do well enough! Or, if you are deplorable, decide to war on you. Oh! The break is over. Look lively, Captain, your fate is in your hands!"

Jim wasn't sure if she was kidding or not, but the situation was serious enough to illicit his best attempt. He looked over to Spock, who caught his eyes, and nodded. They would give it their best shot- and that was all anyone could really ask of them.

"Captain Kirk," their host said, dramatically. "You'll start. I'll ask Commander Spock a question, and he'll write down the answer. It's up to you to tell us what he wrote!"

Jim fought back a grimace. This didn't look well.

But he knew Spock, right? Better than anyone else- except maybe Uhura, they had dated. And Spock knew him better than anyone but Bones, right? There was no way they could blow this completely.

"We'll start off easy." She winked two of her eyes. Turning to Spock, she said, "Commander Spock, what's your birth year?"

Well that was easy enough, Jim supposed. He'd read Spock's file more times than he could count. "2230." Kirk answered, easily.

"Wow, you got it!" Spock's writing was blown up in a holo behind them. Their host happily gestured to it. "A perfect match. But that's only the first question." She turned to Spock, grinning. "Ready Commander Spock?"

He nodded.

The questions started off easily.

"What is Captain Kirk's favorite color?"

"Previously, red. It is now blue."

"What is Commander Spock's favorite genre of holo?"

"Documentary."

"What's Captain Kirk's mother's name?"

"Winona Kirk."

"Where was Commander Spock born?"

"Shi'Kahr, on Vulcan."

The first strike surprised Jim so badly he nearly jumped.

"Captain Kirk, how many siblings does Commander Spock have?"

"None." He answered.

The buzzer went off.

"Uh-oh! Looks like you got it wrong!" She gestured back at the holo behind her, which read, "two."

Kirk stared over at Spock.

Really!? He wanted to scream. *How have you hid this from me all this time?*

Spock didn't meet his eye.

Well, fine. No more answering without thinking- he was *really* going to search himself before each answer.

And then the questions started to get harder.

"What is Commander Spock's favorite season?"

"Spring."

"Who was Captain Kirk's best friend in school?"

"Doctor McCoy, to whom he refers as Bones."

"Did Commander Spock enjoy school as a child?"

"The material- the learning, yes, the place? No."

"What's Captain Kirk's favorite place in the universe to be?"

"Aboard the Enterprise."

"Has Commander Spock ever broken a bone? If so, how many?"

"Yes, and if we're counting re-breaks, it's gonna be… 22 times now."

"How old was Captain Kirk when he had his first romantic kiss?"

"Twelve. He would describe it as un-romantic, however."

"What is Captain Kirk's least favorite food?"

Kirk winced. Spock would guess salad- everyone would guess salad. But he couldn't lie; their host had put little buzzers around their wrists that somehow worked as lie detectors. He wrote out his answer and sighed, ready for another strike. They each had four, but he had a feeling that there were even harder questions ahead.

"Tapioca pudding."

Jim snapped his head to attention, staring at Spock in shock. He'd guessed it. But how the hell had he guessed it? Had they ever eaten anything close to pudding together? Ever talked about it? He couldn't remember, but then, Spock had perfect recall- maybe Kirk really had said something before.

"You got it! But Captain Kirk- you look so surprised! Care to share your thoughts?"

"I… most people would guess salad." He said, dumbly.

She laughed. A laugh-track was activated along with her. "Well, there you go! Looks like he sure read you!" She winked at the camera, two eyes fluttering in quick succession.

They made it to the third round, which absolutely delighted their host. "Sixty-two percent of participants only make it this far!" She warned, lightly. "From here out, each question will be more and more difficult. Do you have what it takes?"

Jim wasn't sure how long they had to last in order to see about the treaty. Could the game even be won?

"Captain Kirk." Their host draped herself dramatically against his podium. "Can you tell us about Spock's favorite childhood memory?"

Oh jeez. There was no way…

Except, when he searched his mind, he could.

"Uh, yeah." He blinked. When had Spock told him this? "When he was eight, his dad had to go off-planet for a diplomatic mission, so his mom decided to take him on a trip to the North. Spock had never seen any big bodies of water, so she took him to the biggest body of water on Vulcan- uh, Sh'i're. It's about as big as Terra's Lake Huron, she told him that she'd been there and. Well, anyway. There were silver birds out and they just sat on the coast and kind of watched the water, which is super still- no moon on Vulcan, no tides. He fell asleep on her shoulder and when he woke up she was carrying him back to the hover."

Spock was regarding him across the room with wide eyes. On the holo behind them was 'My mother took me to lake Sh'i're' and nothing more. The host grinned wide, saying, "Wow! What a great memory!"

She slid over to Spock. "On a more somber note, what's Kirk's biggest fear?" She looked to the camera, laughed, and said, "The endless vacuum of space? Death? Pain?"

Kirk looked down at his PADD. Most people would assume it was losing his ship- and that was a fear of his, huge and looming in the back of his mind whenever he bent the rules, whenever he stepped out of line, but…

"Losing his crew." Spock said.

Jim lifted his head from where he'd been staring at his written answer. Something about the way Spock was looking at him made him lower his gaze, heart pounding.

"What is Captain Kirk's favorite number?"

"Seven."

"What human quirk annoys Commander Spock the most?"

"Blowing raspberries."

"The name of Captain Kirk's second crush?"

"Wallace Greenly."

"What job aboard the Enterprise would Commander Spock never have?"

"Medical, he hates touching blood."

"What would Captain Kirk say his worst habit is?"

"Biting his lip."

"What physical feature of his mother did Commander Spock most prefer?"

"Her smile."

"What color was the hair of the person Captain Kirk disliked most when he was younger?"

"Blonde."

"What human holiday does Commander Spock dislike most?"

"You'd think it would be St. Patrick's day, but it's Easter. He doesn't like how illogical the combination of eggs and rabbits are."

"What Vulcan mannerism does Captain Kirk most enjoy?"

"The way in which we raise our eyebrows."

"How many times has Commander Spock cursed out loud in his life?"

"Uh, seventeen."

"Which of his birthdays did Captain Kirk hate most?"

"His ninth."

And then the questions became absurd. Their host lost her smile and instead looked concerned, if not determined.

"How many times has Commander Spock had what is commonly referred to as Vulcan Flu?"

"Three."

"What size of shoe did Captain Kirk wear when he was fourteen?"

"Nine."

"What did Commander Spock's father eat for breakfast most often during his childhood?"

"Enree rice and shalek milk."

"How many sexual partners has Kirk had?"

"He is not certain but he would guess forty nine."

"What does Commander Spock think about when he hears the word 'banquet?'"

"His mother in a champagne gown from one of the diplomat banquets."

On and on they went, until finally:

"What color is Commander Spock going to write down on his PADD?" She seemed desperate.

Kirk stared at her, thrown off his game for a second before he took a stab in the dark. And yet, as he opened his mouth, he somehow knew the answer would be true. "Chartreuse."

Their host looked back at the holo, absolutely flabbergasted. She hurriedly turned to the recorders, saying, "And now, a brief message from our board of directors." She made the same motion as she had at the first break and then whirled on Kirk, three eyes all narrowed dangerously.

"You cannot continue this!" She hissed.

He blinked. "What? Why not?"

"Only three others have ever made it past the next question, and they were elected as Royalty there after." She whirled on Spock, pointing. "You must answer wrong!"

He raised a brow.

"Even if you know the answer, you must not get it right. They will see you, yes, they will see you, and they will sign your treaty, but no one must win the game! I am going to ask you the most difficult, puzzling question I have prepared, and you must answer incorrectly."

They were in the final round, so even one wrong answer meant the game would end. Kirk looked over to Spock, shrugging. They had what they wanted- there was no reason to go on any longer. "Do as she says, Spock. It was fun, but it's been a long day."

He nodded.

Their host looked remarkably less frazzled then. She smoothed her suite out and practiced her smile, rubbing the top of her bald head to indicate she was ready to continue.

"And we're back!" She said. "Will Captain Kirk and Commander Spock make it to the conclusion? It seems impossible, but on Read Me, anything can happen!" She turned to Spock. "Commander Spock- everything rides on your answer. Are you ready?"

He nodded.

"Here it is- the tricky question." She turned to Kirk. "Captain Kirk. You are in a tunnel. It is long, and dark, and you have been walking for hours. You are thirsty and hungry, and nearly going blind in the darkness. You come upon a cave, which is lit with bioluminescent moss. Ahead of you, the cave splits into ten different branches; the leftmost being number one, and the rightmost behind the tenth. At your feet you find three objects. A canteen, a rope, and a knife. You may only take one. The earth is soft and dangerously loose, and it pulls at your shoes, filling them and weighing you down. Now, here is the question. Which tunnel do you pick, which object do you bring, and do you continue with your heavy shoes on your feet- fighting them out of the ground with each step- or do you remove them?"

Kirk thought about it.

He'd pick the eighth tunnel, favoring his right and not wanting to get too close to the middle for fear of cave in, but not choosing the sides since they seemed most likely to end prematurely. He'd take the rope; getting out of the cave was most important, and it could help most in that regard, even if he met enemies ahead, and even if the canteen had water. And he'd keep his shoes on- who knew what was in the ground below him?

He looked up at Spock.

"He will take the first tunnel, the knife, and remove his shoes."

Their host looked hopefully back at the holo.

She positively beamed. "Uh-oh!" She said, giddy. "You got it wrong!"

The entire studio chanted, "E-LIM-IN-ATION!"

"If you had been guessing for real, though?" Jim started. They were on their way up to the planet's capitol palace. "Just for laughs. What would you have said?"

Spock didn't even pause to think about it. "The eighth tunnel, the rope, and you would have kept your shoes upon your feet."

Kirk stopped walking completely.

"Captain?"

"Mr. Spock," he said. "I think something just might be up with us."

"So this is the infamous Captain James T. Kirk. Pathetic."

After getting captured by so many hostile aliens, Jim had come to expect the speech. The first couple of time's he'd heard it, he'd flinched, and even taken some of it to heart. He'd wondered how he could allow himself and his crew to fall into someone else's hands, how he could have possibly been outwitted. Anymore, he wondered what the prison food would be like and if they'd let the crew play cards. Gotta keep the mind sharp and the belly full, after all.

The situation wasn't looking good. The entire away party- Uhura, Chekov, Sulu, and their three security officers- had been captured, hands bound behind their backs. From their intel, the negotiations with the Slivic people were supposed to be, while a little rocky, still rather safe. They'd beamed down in dress uniform and left the ship in the care of Spock, who'd begged off being sent to yet another ice planet.

"I've taken your weapons and your communication devices. They've been broken, and word has been sent up to your ship. There will be no Federation on this planet, your ships will turn and flee." Their capturer- Matechicht was the leader of the continent, young and bright, and had very, very thick eyebrows. It was the last part that Jim really was caught up on. Honestly? He kind of liked them. "I have just sent word. As of now, everyone on your ship will have heard that you are all dead."

Jim did wince at that. There were a lot of people on board who really didn't need that kind of thing again. Several missions, it had been true; the away team had been, for the most part, slaughtered. The emotional fallout of the news was going to be severe. His poor crew was getting goddamn holiday after this fiasco, mark his words.

"Throw them in the brig." Matechicht demanded.

They were marched deep below ground, so that even if Chekov and Kirk managed to engineer makeshift communicators, there would be now way they could get word out to the ship. The cell the were thrown into was impenetrable- solid rock walls, a two-inch thick titanium door, and zero furniture.

Great. He doubted there would be meals and cards, then.

Not that it mattered, because they wouldn't be stuck there for long.

"So." Kirk started, watching as the crew quickly took turns relieving each other of their restraints. Uhura freed Kirk of his, smiling lightly as he rubbed his wrists and shook the pins and needles out of his hands. He crossed his arms over his chest to stave off the chill.

There was no easy way to reveal his secret, but he was the Captain. He couldn't let his team live in fear when there was another way. He and Spock hadn't been sure how to go about it after the realization, but there was no hiding it now. Maybe it would shock the crew, scare them. Maybe they'd loose some of their respect for him. But it had to be done.

"No one needs to worry." he said. "Mr. Spock will be sending one team to the surface to recover us, and one to take out Matechicht and return the rightful rulers to power so that we can begin negotiations. His little dictatorship ends here." He took in a deep breath. "You all know I didn't managed to get a message out over the comms before we were captured. You are… probably wondering how I know what I know."

"Not really." Uhura said.

He blinked.

"Yeah, ve figured zat you vould let Mr. Spock know ze situation as soon as ve vere keptured." Chekov said. "Haz he informed ze crew zat ve are unharmed? I have a betting pool on ze amount of times I am declared dead and do not vant to lose."

He stared.

"What?" Sulu asked. "You look all shocked."

"I…" He trailed off. "You knew?"

"How could ve not have?" Chekov laughed.

Jim turned to the red shirts, incredulous. His bridge staff was one thing, but he'd hardly seen these people before- surely they had to be surprised, right?

"Oh, um, were we not supposed to know?" The girl with silver hair blushed a deep blue.

"Gossip travels fast on a starship." A man with dark hair and blank eyes shrugged.

"Yeah. Ya'll ain't subtle." The singular full-human drawled.

Kirk couldn't believe it. "How- how long have you known!?" It had only been two and a half weeks since the game show, when he and Spock had found that they had formed a bond without knowing it. They'd hidden it well… or so he thought.

"About four months." Sulu shrugged.

"F-four months!?" Jim choked. "I- we didn't even know until a couple of weeks ago!"

Silence.

"You're kidding me, sir, right?" Sulu asked.

"No! How could we have known?"

"Ve literally had a game vhere ve vould find out vhere ze two of you vhere by asking ze ozer." Chekov said. "How could you not have known?"

"Wh-what?!" Thinking back on it, they *had* asked him about Spock a lot in recent months… "B-but of course I would know where Spock is. He's my first officer."

Uhura said, "Sir, no disrespect, but I won the first round of Chekov's game by getting you to say Spock was in the fresher."

He'd completely forgotten about that.

"I von game two ven Mr. Spock started to tell me zat you vere taking bubble bath and zen cut off and clammed up like Russian mafia member under duress."

"Holy fuck."

"I second that, sir." Sulu chuckled.

"And you mean to tell us that you didn't know yourselves?" Uhura asked.

"Well… No."

"Zat," Chekov declared, "Is pathetic. All due respect, sir."

"Oh my god." Kirk groaned. "Kill me now."

"According to Chekov's calculations, we won't have time. Spock should be here any minute now."

"You guys have *calculations?!* "

"Yes, sir. It is a science now." Chekov nodded, sagely.

The red shirts started to giggle.

“You’re fired. All of you. Ever last one.”

“Of course, sir.” Uhura said.

“And-“ he paused, turning towards the door.

The entire team started to laugh.

“Oh fuck you guys!” Jim turned back to them, beet red, and said, “Come on, get away from the door.”

Spock threw it open and said, “Captain.”

The team’s laughing doubled.

Jim tried to suppress his blush, but couldn’t really help it.

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Have I missed something, Captain?”

“Nope. Nope! Nothing at all.” He stepped forward and grabbed Spock’s hand, ignoring the spark that started within him, and dragged his first officer away, ignoring the cat calls from his command team. At the touch, the last few minutes of his time with the away team went through to Spock, who didn’t seem surprised in the least.

“We’re firing the crew, Spock.”

“Of course, Captain.”

“I’m bringing each and every one of them up on charges of insubordination.”

“Yes, Jim.”

“Especially Chekov.”

“If that is what you wish, t’hy’la.”

They climbed up to the surface, Jim muttering the whole way while Spock placated him. The team behind them was still laughing, but they’d at least stopped with the catcalls so that Jim could wrestle the blush off of his features.

They stepped out into the sunlight, blinking rapidly to adjust to the glare it sent off of the icy ground about them. Jim turned to his team and then looked back out at the village, wondering how Spock’s team was doing. Based on the lack of guards coming to stop them from escaping, he’d guess pretty well.

“Eight to beam up, Mr. Scott.” Spock said.

“Aye, sir. Found the Captin usin’ yer fancy echolocation, didja?”

Kirk looked at Spock, waving his hands frantically. *See? See!? Mutiny!* “Mr. Scott,” he said out loud, “You’re fired.”

“*Aye, sir. Beaming ya up now.”*

The world faded into soft golds and blues, and in a second, they were standing back aboard the enterprise. Scotty was there to great them, looking entirely too smug. “Captain Kirk.” He started, grinning. “Where about’s is Mr. Spock, wouldja say?”

“Transfers to the Faragut for everyone.” He turned away from them as they all began to laugh, looking up at Spock. Even the Vulcan seemed faintly amused, despite it all being at their expense. “If you all know anyway, then I get to do *this* and no one can complain.” He leaned up quickly and kissed Spock, chastely, and then drew back, looking back at the crew as if to dare them to say anything.

Chekov and Sulu gave him a thumbs up.

“Get some, Mr. Spock.” Uhura chuckled.

“I hate all of you.” Kirk declared, but he couldn’t fight the smile from his face.

“Mr. Spock.” Bones drawled, from where he was leaning against a railing on the bridge. “Where is Captain Kirk?”

“In my bed, Doctor McCoy.” Spock looked back over his shoulder to watch the Doctor splutter and choke. “The real question, Doctor, is what it is you are doing aboard the bridge when you are assigned to sick bay.”

McCoy muttered something that sounded like “damn pointy-eared hobgoblin,” but it was around a smile, even as he headed towards the lift.

For a moment, there was silence on the bridge. Then Chekov leaned over to Sulu and said, “Tventy credits, Hikaru, and I believe ze game is over.”

Fin

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